

# Erie County Taxpayer Newsletter



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## From County Executive Chris Collins



Tens of thousands of Erie County residents should have now received discount prescription drug cards from ProAct, Inc. My administration partnered with the company to help defray the costs of prescription drugs for taxpayers in our County.

In the first two weeks since ProAct prescription discount cards were mailed out, taxpayers are already seeing significant savings. According to ProAct, 491 Erie County residents used their new prescription discount cards between April 20 and May 4. Over that two week period, participants saved \$19,547.10 on prescription medications, with an average savings of 43 percent.

These cards are free and may be used by all County residents, regardless of age, income or existing health coverage. The cards may provide significant savings for the uninsured and underinsured. Participants will save an average of ten to 20 percent on brand name drugs and up to 70 percent on generic drugs not covered by your current insurance plan. The cards may also be used for pet medications, discounts on vision, Lasik surgery and hearing products and services. One card can cover any and all family members in a household.

If you didn't receive a ProAct card in the mail, you may pick one up at any participating pharmacy. Most pharmacies in our area carry and accept the cards, including major supermarkets, as do 57,000 pharmacies nationwide. Cards are also available at various County agencies and online at [www.nyrxdiscountcard.com](http://www.nyrxdiscountcard.com). There are no enrollment forms to fill out, no income requirements, no restrictions on use and there is no cost whatsoever to participants.

It's also important to point out there is absolutely no cost to the County for this program. ProAct printed the cards and paid for the mailing.

### Contact the County Executive

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## Erie County Offering Prescription Discount Cards

Erie County Executive Chris Collins is pleased to announce the County is partnering with ProAct, Inc., a division of Kinney Drug, to help lower the costs of prescription drugs for County residents.

County Executive Chris Collins said, "We're always looking for ways to save taxpayers money, and when ProAct approached us with this program, it was a no brainer. This is a great opportunity to help families who do not have adequate benefits to receive affordable prescriptions."

ProAct, Inc. President Dave Warner said, "We are excited to be working with Erie County and its various agencies to help reduce prescription drug costs for County residents. There are no enrollment forms to fill out, no membership fees, no income requirements, no restrictions on use and most importantly, no cost to participants."

"Residents who have prescription drug coverage can use the card to save money on drugs that are not covered by their health plan," said Social Services Commissioner Carol Dankert.



County Executive Collins and ProAct spokesman Mike Maenza at the press conference.

## Erie County Helps Combat Underage Drinking

The Erie County Department of Mental Health and the County Sheriff's Office collaborated with a group of mental health and chemical dependence agencies to put on a half-day conference called "Underage Drinking: It's Everybody's Problem" at the studios of WNED-TV last month.

The program was co-sponsored by Px20, a formal collaboration of County contracted agencies, whose focus includes education and prevention for mental health and chemical dependency.

A crowd of nearly 200 parents, school administrators, board of education members, law enforcement officers, and representatives from the substance abuse and mental health fields came to the WNED-TV studios on the morning of April 28th for this Conference. The event served to educate all in attendance on the local and national underage drinking phenomenon and why this issue is so important. In addition, attendees were exposed to innovative local strategies that have been employed by schools, agencies, and law enforcement organizations to address underage drinking.

Billed as a community call to action, the event featured Erie County Sheriff Timothy Howard, who served as master of ceremonies presented on some of the more successful strategies that have been launched by the Sheriff's Office over the years. Initiatives like the underage drinking tip line, radio public service announcements, billboards, trailers played in area movie theaters and various printed materials created by the Sheriff's Office were highlighted.

The keynote speaker for the event was Karen Carpenter-Palumbo, the Commissioner of the New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services. Commissioner Carpenter-Palumbo was especially impressed by the mandatory parent forum strategy and promised to do her part to promote the idea across the state. Other speakers included Phil Endress, the Commissioner of the Erie County Department of Mental Health, Dr. William Wiecezorek, the Director of the Center for Health and Social Research at Buffalo State College, and Prevention Focus Executive Director Matt Smith. Former Buffalo Police Chief, and current White House Office of National Drug Control Policy Director, R. Gil Kerlikowske underlined the importance of addressing underage drinking as a national health issue and promised greater support of the prevention effort in a pre-recorded message.

This event was just one part of the Department of Mental Health and Px20's ongoing multi-dimensional education and prevention plan for chemical dependency and mental health.



*County Mental Health Commissioner Phil Endress, OASAS Commissioner Karen Carpenter-Palumbo and Sheriff Tim Howard at the conference.*

## Erie County Helps Solve Cold Case Homicide

The use of forensic DNA technology performed at the Erie County Central Police Services Forensic Laboratory provided key investigative information which led to the recent conviction of a Buffalo man for a homicide that occurred 35 years ago. Nineteen year-old Michelle Dixon was found lying face down with a pillow covering her head on May 20, 1975. She had been shot nine times in the head and back.

In 2008, the case was reopened by the Buffalo Police Department Cold Case Squad and evidence was submitted to the Erie County Central Police Services Forensic Laboratory. Upon analysis by Senior Forensic Serologist Kristen Betker, DNA recovered from a sample taken from the body of Michelle Dixon was found to match the DNA of 56 year old Bernard Thomas of South Division Street. Bernard Thomas was subsequently arrested and convicted of intentional second degree murder. He will be sentenced on May 21.



County Executive Chris Collins was pleased to be the keynote speaker at the Mental Health Peer Connection luncheon last month.



## "CSI Buffalo"

Erie County's Forensic Laboratory Director Dr. John Simich detailed the use of modern forensic techniques at the Buffalo and Erie County Public Library last month.

His presentation showed how modern forensics could have been used to assist in the prosecution of the "Three Thayers," a trial of three brothers accused of killing John Love in 1825. He also included a brief history of the Erie County Forensic Laboratory and the role that a Buffalo physician played in the beginning of modern day firearms examinations.



## Honoring Former Prisoners of War

County Executive Chris Collins thanked a group of veterans, who were also prisoners of war, for their incredible sacrifice and service to their country.

Collins presented a proclamation declaring it "Former Prisoner of War Recognition Day" in Erie County.



## Six Sigma Training Continues

Five Erie County Black Belt candidates successfully completed a rigorous 150 question examination. This is a great step forward for certification.

The Wave 4 Green Belts have completed classroom training and are now preparing for their examination later this month. These projects are moving through the DMAIC (Define, Measure, Analyze, Improve, Control) model and are expected to be completed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter.



## Kick off to Kids Day

County Executive Collins helped kick off Kids Day for the Buffalo News last month along with Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown, and Sarah Kopasz, who is the Variety Club celebrity child for 2010.

Profits made from papers sold by the Buffalo News on Kids Day benefit Women and Children's Hospital of Buffalo.



*Erie County Senior Services Commissioner Brenda Ward and Buffalo Mayor Byron Brown pose with Aubrey Turner (center). Mr. Turner was named outstanding Senior Citizen of the Year by the Erie County Department of Senior Services.*

Since 1983, Kids Day contributions have totaled more than \$3.7 million, helping care for sick and injured children all across Western New York.



## Erie County Thanks Law Enforcement Officials at STOP-DWI Breakfast

Law enforcement officials from all over Erie County were honored for their efforts to crack down on drunk drivers during a special breakfast late last month.

Each year, Erie County recognizes the tremendous dedication of our best police officers, prosecutors and probation officers for their efforts to deal with drunk drivers and the risk they pose to our citizens.

In 2009, the County returned nearly \$1 million in revenue from fines to Erie County police agencies, and allocated over \$500,000 to support the prosecution and probation supervision of DWI offenders. These agencies rewarded that support with nearly 3,600 DWI arrests. The County's program of sobriety checkpoints and coordinated saturation patrols is the most active in the state. In addition to the regular emphasis DWI receives from our police agencies, Erie County funded 16 checkpoints and over 275 roving patrols dedicated to DWI enforcement.

Despite these efforts, in 2009 we lost 21 members of our community, and 47 more were seriously injured by drunk drivers. The County pledges continuous support of these enforcement efforts to prevent the next crash and save the next victim.

This was the 19<sup>th</sup> annual Stop-DWI Awards breakfast.



*Stop-DWI Director John Sullivan poses with Evans Police Officer Patrick Alter, County Executive Collins, Eden Police Officer Nick Blas, Evans Officer Brian Kauzala and Legislator Lynne Dixon.*



### Celebrating 50 Years!

County Executive Collins congratulated 11 couples who were all celebrating their 50th wedding anniversary in Cheektowaga earlier this month.



### Saying Hello

County Executive Collins met Sara Ogger, the recently appointed Executive Director of the New York Council for the Humanities, at a reception at the Darwin Martin House this month.

### Two New Disc Golf Courses are Opening in County Parks

Erie County plans to open two new disc golf courses in the County Parks this fall. A beginner course is planned for Ellicott Creek Park that will be stroller and family friendly and a tournament course will open at Chestnut Ridge.



The addition of these two courses will bring the County's total disc golf courses to five, making the County parks a venue for national disc golf tournaments.



## Helping Children in Need

A march to raise consciousness about preventing child abuse took place on April 28, 2010. About 300 people marched from Lafayette Square in downtown Buffalo to the steps of City Hall. Erie County's Director of Public Advocacy, Sawrie Becker, read a proclamation. April is Child Abuse Prevention Month in the United States, and May marks Foster Parent Month.

During May, Erie County will host a luncheon to honor foster and adoptive parents. For more information, contact Janine Gavin Pokrandt at 858-6701.

Erie County's Department of Social Services manages 250 certified foster parents, and contracts with 15 foster care agencies. The County is reaching out to attract new foster parents to meet a growing need.

There is a special need for foster homes for teens, large sibling groups and Hispanic children.

Currently, 137 children are freed for adoption, and need permanent adoptive families in Erie County. For more information about becoming a foster or adoptive parent, visit [www.erie.gov/depts/socialservices](http://www.erie.gov/depts/socialservices).



*County employees take part in a march to prevent child abuse.*



*Small Business Administration Director Franklin Sciortino, Michelle Bailey of F&S Design Studio, County Executive Chris Collins and Jake Schneider, president of Schneider Design Architects, pose in front of the former Alling and Cory building in Buffalo.*

## Honoring Small Business Owners

County Executive Chris Collins proclaimed the week of May 10 through 15 "Small Business Week" in Erie County. He delivered the proclamation to Franklin Sciortino of the Small Business Administration in front of the forming Alling and Cory building, which is being transformed into student housing.

Michelle Bailey of F&S Design Studio was there for the press conference. She is being honored as the Young Entrepreneur of the Year by the Small Business Administration. Her company is in charge of the landscaping at the Alling and Cory building.

Jake Schneider, the president of Schneider Design Architects, also attended the press conference. His company is in charge of the renovations at the former Alling and Cory building.

Each year, the Small Business Administration honors local business owners for their contributions to the community during the month of May.

## Coming next issue:

- **Honoring EMS Professionals**
- **Update on County Beaches**

New Civil Service announcements with the last filing dates up to **May 26, 2010** are now available on the County's website.

Please see:  
<http://www.erie.gov/employment/index.asp>

or call the Erie Co. Civil Service Exam Line at **716-858-8729**.

